

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9731

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T LONDON 04802

LIMDIS

GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM, UK, NATO

SUBJECT: MBFR -- A BRITISH SUGGESTION ON OPTION III

1. TICKELL CALLED US TO FCO MARCH 26 TO DISCUSS A BRITISH "IDEA" ON RECASTING OPTION III. TICKELL SAID THAT THE IDEA WAS A PERSONAL PROPOSAL OF HIS; IT HAD NO SANCTION BY HMG. HE HAD, HOWEVER, ASKED MOD TO STUDY ITS MILITARY FEASIBILITY. CONCEDING THAT HIS SUGGESTION MIGHT BE "HALF-BAKED," TICKELL SAID NEVERTHELESS HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE US MBFR COMMUNITY CONSIDER IT IN THE COURSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE US PAPER ON OPTION III WHICH THE BRITISH UNDERSTAND MIGHT BE COMPLETED IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS.

2. NOTING THAT IN THE BRITISH VIEW ALL APPROACHES TO OPTION III DISCUSSED SO FAR BETWEEN US, UK AND FRG HAVE

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DRAWBACKS, TICKELL PROPOSED THAT THE SOVIET TANK COMPO-

NENT BE REMOVED FROM OPTION III ALTOGETHER. OPTION III MIGHT THEN BECOME A STRAIGHT NUCLEAR PACKAGE DESIGNED TO BUY (A) THE CONCEPT OF A COMMON CEILING, (B) CONSTRAINTS (LESS HARSH THAN HERETOFORE CONSIDERED) ON SOVIET NUCLEAR SYSTEMS, AND (C) AGREEMENT ON THE OBJECTIVES OF PHASE ONE. TICKELL CONTINUED THAT INSTEAD OF ASKING FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF 1700 SOVIET TANKS THE WEST COULD ASK FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF 68,000 SOVIET TROOPS FROM SPECIFIED DIVISIONS (PRESUMABLY FROM THE TANK ARMY) BUT NOT THE TANKS WHICH THOSE SOLDIERS MAN. HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO BLUR THE TANK ISSUE AND ADDRESS IT AT A THE TANKS.

3. EXPLAINING HIS IDEA FURTHER, TICKELL SAID THAT HIS PROPOSAL MIGHT GET AROUND PROBLEMS WHICH HAD SURFACED IN RECENT TRIPARTITE DISCUSSIONS OF OPTION III: I.E. NO CONSTRAINTS; DIFFERING CONSTRAINTS; AGREED CEILINGS UNDER WHICH THE SOVIETS COULD INCREASE NUMBERS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE ALLIES COULD INCREASE NUMBERS OF TANKS. AN ADVANTAGE HE SAW IN HIS PROPOSED APPROACH WAS THAT IT WOULD GIVE THE WEST FLEXIBILITY AS TO EQUIPMENT LEVELS AND NOT INVOLVE CONSTRAINTS ON US OR ALLIED TANKS.

4. TICKELL ADDED THAT THE GERMANS TOO ARE STUDYING HIS PROPOSAL. HE HAD INFORMED A GERMAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL MARCH 26 THAT HE WAS FLOATING THE IDEA WITH THE US.

5. COMMENT: WE DID NOT OFFER ANY COMMENT TO TICKELL ON HIS IDEA BEYOND ASSURING HIM THAT WE WOULD REPORT IT TO WASHINGTON. HE underscored SEVERAL TIMES THAT THIS WAS CONSIDERATION. HE READILY CONCEDED THAT THE MOD MIGHT KNOCK HOLES IN IT, BUT HE SEEMED CONVINCED THAT IT COULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL APPEAL.

RICHARDSON

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